SOUTH SLOUGH
NATIONAL ESTUARINE
RESEARCH RESERVE

PLANNING FOR CHANGE AROUND OREGON'S COOS BAY

This project will help a diverse range of stakeholders work together to make informed decisions about natural resource and community development issues along Oregon's Coos Bay.

Stay in touch

The NERRS Science Collaborative is committed to sharing information about the projects we fund in the most effective way we can. Updates about this project will be communicated through nerrs.noaa.gov, webinars, conferences, and meetings. If you would like to stay in touch with this project, contact our program coordinator Cindy Tufts: cindy.tufts@unh.edu

For more information about this project, contact Craig Cornu, coordinator of monitoring programs at the South Slough NERR: 541.888.8270 ext 301 or craig.cornu@state.or.us

What's happening?

A multidisciplinary team led by the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR) and the Coos Watershed Association received a $549,826 grant to help local communities better understand and prepare for the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of land use and climate change. Building on a stakeholder-driven pilot that established a community vision and developed an action plan to further that vision, the team will create an indicators program, enhance hydrodynamic modeling capability, and expand the geographic scope of the pilot. Ultimately their goal is to help a diverse range of stakeholders make informed decisions about natural resource and community development issues.

Why this project?

Around Coos Bay, the natural environment is a source of pride and a foundation for local quality of life. Yet, like in many rural coastal areas, the abundant natural resources also support a range of economic activities and can be a source of conflict between the overlapping interests of different industries and sectors. Divisiveness has made it difficult for community stakeholders to assess the long-term effects of existing and proposed future economic development, and as a result, take actions to conserve quality of life and natural resources. This challenge is compounded by both the absence of science-based information to support decision making and the availability of conflicting information (science-based or otherwise) that different stakeholders bring to the debate.

Fortunately, initiatives like the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds have helped some stakeholders test methods to develop a shared community vision, a common understanding of the state of the watersheds, and an action plan in pursuit of shared goals. This project team aims to build on that foundation by drawing additional stakeholders into the Partnership, developing an indicator-based program for monitoring the area's environmental and socioeconomic trends, tracking the impact of the Partnership's community action plan, and validating a predictive hydrodynamic model for the Coos estuary that can be used to track the impact of the Partnership's community action plan that planners can use to run various climate and land use change-related scenarios.

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National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative
University of New Hampshire

This project will expand the existing Partnership For Coastal Watersheds by engaging new stakeholders through the media, the South Slough Coastal Training Program, and convening community workshops (left). The team will provide robust local water quality time-series data through the NERRS System Wide Monitoring Program to help validate the hydrodynamic model so it can be used to provide a scientific basis for understanding resource conservation needs (right).

About the funder

The NERRS Science Collaborative puts Reserve-based science to work for coastal communities coping with the impacts of land use change, stormwater, non-point source pollution, and habitat degradation in the context of a changing climate. Our threefold approach to connecting science to decision making includes:

- Funding: We award an average of $4 million annually to projects that incorporate collaboration and applied science to address a coastal management problem.
- Transfer of knowledge: We are committed to sharing the knowledge generated by the local, place-based research we fund. If you're interested in following this project, contact cindy.tufts@unh.edu
- Graduate education: We support TIDES, a Master's of Science program at UNH that provides the skills needed to effectively link science to coastal decision making.

The program operates by a cooperative agreement between the University of New Hampshire (UNH) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Learn more at....

nerrs.noaa.gov/ScienceCollaborative.aspx

How will this project work?

The South Slough NERR will facilitate this project using the techniques of Collaborative Learning and the "Collaboration Compact" that was developed by the members of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds Steering Committee. The Committee will provide direction and focus for this project, with support from a technical advisory group of sociologists, economists, and environmental scientists. The Committee also will guide expansion of the Partnership by engaging new stakeholders through the media, existing professional relationships, the South Slough Coastal Training Program, and convening community workshops.

The Committee and a technical advisory group will work together to select and review appropriate indicators that can be applied directly to tracking environmental and socioeconomic trends and the impact of the Partnership's community action plan. These indicators will focus on issues that are identified as a priority by the expanding Partnership. For example, an ecosystem-based indicator could relate to the status of commercially important fish and shellfish and how these species may be affected by land use and climate-related changes. A socioeconomic indicator could look at the social impacts of land use change resulting from increased residential development.

The technical advisory group also will oversee expansion of the South Slough's robust water quality data collection network and advise the deployment and management of other instrumentation to help validate the hydrodynamic model to ensure its utility as a basis for understanding the effects of future change. Ultimately, the subgroup will work with the Committee to share indicator and modeling information about watershed resources and socioeconomic conditions that are relevant to their intended users in an accessible and understandable format.

This project will help stakeholders assess social impacts of a changing landscape in the Coos Bay Watershed.